

# Moving to the Next Generation - The Rendering Technology of Ryse

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# Introduction Ryse

- Launch title for Xbox One
- Close-combat game taking place in ancient Rome
- Story-driven adventure, ~2 hrs of cinematics
- Started in Budapest as Kinect title but full reboot in Frankfurt for next-gen
- A lot of novelties and unknowns for Crytek
  - New genre (3rd person perspective)
  - First console launch title
  - New evolving platform
  - New team
- Small team of rendering engineers fully dedicated to the project



# Rendering Challenges

- Dawn of a new console generation
- Ryse designated as visual showcase for Xbox One from beginning
- Target hardware less powerful than high-end PCs at launch
- Major challenge: How can you still get people excited for next-gen visuals?



# Rendering Challenges

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- Crysis 3 already a visually rich game on Ultra settings
  - Adding just more not an option on weaker hardware
  - Post-processing already maxed out in previous generation
- Focused on consistency of core components instead and worked on improving the details
  - Shading, material definition, lighting quality and global illumination effects
  - Strong focus on what you see all the time as opposed to specific features

# Rendering Challenges

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- Wanted to get away from the typical “gamey” look
  - No real material definition (mostly due to lack of reflections)
  - Overly high contrast to make flat diffuse materials more visually appealing
  - Noisy image when specular is used (shading aliasing)
  - Over the top usage of post-processing to cover image quality deficiencies
- Wanted to get a step closer to the aesthetics and quality of CG films
  - Well recognizable materials
  - Clean image with little to no aliasing
  - Soft lighting, global illumination effects like light bleeding and natural occlusion
- One key to that is to ground rendering more on physically based paradigms

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# Physically Based Shading

# Physically Based Shading Overview

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- Models light-material interaction based on real-world behavior
  - General strong focus on consistency, everything obeys to one well defined rule set
  - Takes a lot of guesswork out of graphics programming
- Considerable implications on several areas
  - Material Model
    - Enforces plausible material parameters and discourages unrealistic setups
    - Defines clear rules for assets, leading to more art/content consistency
  - Shading Model
    - More complex BRDFs, Fresnel, normalization of specular highlights, energy conservation in general
  - Lighting Model
    - **Have to be careful to preserve material integrity through entire pipeline**
    - Real-world reflection ratios useless if light source can randomly add diffuse contribution without affecting specular
- Physically Based Shading can only work well if it gets respected in all areas

# Material Model Overview

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- Most common attributes
  - Diffuse albedo
    - Not specifically calibrated in Ryse due to time constraints
  - Specular reflectance
    - Based on IOR values
  - Surface roughness
    - Found inverse roughness to be more intuitive to author (smoothness maps)
  - Per-pixel normal
- Special attributes
  - Translucency
  - Subsurface scattering profile



# Shading Model

- Unified shading model, expressive enough for 99% of materials
- Specular BRDF
  - Cook-Torrance microfacet model [COOK82]

$$f(l, v) = \frac{D(h)F(v, h)G(l, v, h)}{4(n \cdot l)(n \cdot v)}$$

- Normal Distribution Function (NDF): GGX [WALTER07]



$$D(h) = \frac{\alpha^2}{\pi((n \cdot h)^2(\alpha^2 - 1) + 1)^2}$$

- Relatively efficient, has wider tail than other NDFs giving more natural highlights
- Roughness remapped to generate more perceptually linear highlights
  - More intuitive for artists, also more correct linear filtering
$$\alpha = (1 - smoothness * 0.7)^6$$
  - Similar distribution as Blinn-Phong power of  $2^{smoothness * 16}$

# Shading Model

- Specular BRDF
  - Fresnel Term: Common Schlick approximation [SCHLICK94]
    - Linear interpolation between specular color  $F0$  and white
$$F(v, h) = F0 + (1 - F0)(1 - (v \cdot h))^5$$
  - Visibility Term
    - Evaluated many terms, opted for Schlick-Smith approximation in the end [SCHLICK94]
    - Using remapped roughness, to avoid highlights getting too hot on smooth surfaces and reduce gain on rough materials at grazing angles (artistic choice)

$$G(l, v, h) = G_1(l)G_1(v) \quad G_1(v) = \frac{n \cdot v}{(n \cdot v)(1 - k) + k} \quad k = \frac{(0.8 + 0.5\alpha)^2}{2}$$

# Shading Model

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- Diffuse BRDF
  - Standard Lambertian BRDF just a flat constant color
    - N.L term is just accounting for increased projected area at grazing angles
    - Assumes surface to be a perfectly isotropic diffusor without any view dependency
  - Oren-Nayar model used in Ryse [OREN94]
    - Takes into account retro-reflection based on surface roughness
      - Subtle but nice quality improvement for rough materials like stone
    - Converges to Lambertian model for smooth materials
    - Efficient approximations for the full quality model exist [FUJII][GOTANDA12]

# Deferred Shading

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- Started with Crysis 2 codebase which used Deferred Lighting/Light Prepass
  - Minimal GBuffer with just normals and roughness
  - Irradiance and radiance computed in deferred pass
  - Material attributes applied in a second forward pass
- Deferred Lighting does not work well with Physically Based Shading
  - Fresnel term requires specular reflectance (F0) for shading
- Performed transition to full deferred shading for Ryse
  - Bonus: Less draw calls since just one scene pass required
  - Eventually made its way to previous-gen consoles with more aggressive GBuffer packing [SOUSA13]

# Deferred Shading GBuffer

- Using 3 tightly packed 32 bit render targets (RGBA8) plus device depth-stencil surface

RT0	RGB: Normals XYZ	A: Translucency Luminance/Prebaked AO Term
RT1	RGB: Diffuse Albedo	A: Subsurface Scattering Profile
RT2	R: Roughness	GBA: Specular YCbCr/Transmittance CbCr

- Normals encoded using BFN approach to avoid 8 bit precision issues [KAPLANYAN10]
- Specular color stored as YCbCr to better support blending to GBuffer (e.g. decals)
  - Allow blending of non-metal decals despite not being able to write alpha during blend ops
  - Can still break when blending colored specular (rare case that was avoided on art side)
- Specular chrominance aliased with transmittance luminance
  - Exploiting mutual exclusivity: colored specular just for metal, translucency just for dielectrics
- Support for prebaked AO value but was just used rarely in the end

# Forward+ versus Deferred

- Considered Forward+ at the beginning, in combination with MSAA [MCKEE12]
- Many open challenges in practice
  - How to handle surface modifiers like decals or wetness efficiently
  - Requires two rendering passes again for efficient light culling
  - Most research so far considered just simple light models (mostly point lights)
    - Many more different light types used in practice (projectors, shadow casting lights, area lights, environment probes, etc.)
    - Potentially low wave occupancy due to number of GPRs required for branching when using complex light models
    - Potential overshading/performance waste due to quad occupancy of tiny triangles
  - Definitely still an interesting option for the future though
- Ended up with hybrid approach
  - Majority of objects going through efficient full deferred shading path
  - Forward+ rendering for materials that have very specific shading requirements (mostly hair and eyes)

# Specular Aliasing

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- Physically Based Shading very prone to specular aliasing
  - High luminance values from normalized BRDF in combination with high-frequency normal information
- Downsampling normal maps discards information
  - Variance gets reduced when normals are averaged
  - Bumpy normal maps become flat with smaller mips
- Normals and roughness strictly coupled in Ryse
  - Conceptually connected, normals represent surface bumpiness on macro scale, roughness on micro scale
  - Roughness stored in normal map alpha channel in source assets
  - Normal variance of mips baked into roughness maps [HILL12]
    - Toksvig factor used to estimate variance and derive new roughness [TOKSVIG04]

# Specular Aliasing

- Problems remain when roughness is modified in GBuffer (decals, rain wetness)
- Addressed by applying normal variance filter in screen space
  - Depth aware filter to avoid issues at silhouette edges (similar to [MITTRING12])
  - Also helps on thin highly reflective geometry
  - Can produce noticeable outline artifacts, especially at grazing light angles
    - Mitigated a bit by reducing specular reflectance for dielectrics

`specLumLinear *= (finalSmoothness + epsilon) / (originalSmoothness + epsilon);`

- Found gained temporal stability to be more important than additional artifacts





# Specular Aliasing

GBuffer  
Filter  
Disabled



# Specular Aliasing

GBuffer  
Filter  
Enabled



# Light Model

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- Common types of analytical light sources used for direct lighting
  - Point lights, projectors, all with support for shadow casting
- No analytical area light model used in Ryse
  - Less of an issue for Ryse since scenario doesn't have artificial light sources (mostly fires instead of light bulbs and tubes)
  - Generally important with PBR to avoid unnatural tiny highlights
  - Just clamped minimum highlight size in BRDF (worked well enough)

# Light Model

- Light Attenuation

- Geometric attenuation accounting for photons spread over larger area at further distance from emitter
- Traditional radius based attenuation models not very natural  $\left(1 - \frac{dist}{r}\right)^2$

- Switched to more physically based model computing radiance emitted from sphere

$$att = \left(1 + \frac{dist}{bulbsize}\right)^{-2}$$

- Bulb size allowed to have unnatural values (e.g. be very high to fake directional sun light)
- Normalized light intensity, so that specified value is reached 1 meter away from light surface

$$normfactor * \left(1 + \frac{1}{bulbsize}\right)^{-2} = 1 \Rightarrow normfactor = \left(1 + \frac{1}{bulbsize}\right)^2$$

- Cutoff radius still required for practical reasons (performance, light leaking)
  - Light fades to 0 in last 20% of cutoff radius

# Indirect Lighting

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- Dropped all constant and hemispherical ambient terms that have just diffuse contribution without any specular
  - Would break the specular reflectance ratios and flatten materials
- Most indirect lighting captured by localized environment probes
- Probes augmented by screen space reflections to get more accurate localization
- Ambient lights to help breaking uniformity

# Environment Probes

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- Image Based Lighting core feature in CRYENGINE for several years  
[MITTRING09]
  - Worked on improved consistency with analytical BRDF and usability for Ryse
- Environment probes captured manually at key locations in levels
  - Around 100 probes used per level in Ryse
  - Compressed using BC6H, size 256x256 for specular cubemaps
- Cubemaps preconvolved offline using custom version of ATI CubemapGen
- Probes sorted by locality based on layers
  - Local probes overwrite more global probes

# Environment Probes

- Parallax correction using geometry proxies to obtain better locality of reflections [BJORKE][LAGARDE12]
- Smooth blend weight falloff to avoid harsh transition between probes
  - Probes are oriented boxes to better fit indoor areas
  - Blend weight for box computed by mapping cube to sphere before applying attenuation function [NOWELL05]

```
float3 MapCubeToSphere( float3 pos )  
{  
    float3 posSq = pos.xyz * pos.xyz;  
    return pos * sqrt( 1 - 0.5 * posSq.yzx - 0.5 * posSq.zxy + 0.333 * posSq.yzx * posSq.zxy );  
}
```

# Ambient Lights

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- Probes stretched over a larger area can lack local light intensity changes resulting in flat ambient
  - Artists need a way to more accurately set up bounce lighting
  - Using regular lights creates undesired specular highlights
  - Using just diffuse from regular lights would break material integrity and flatten surfaces
- Our solution: Ambient Lights
  - Essentially multiplicative light sources applied on top of probes
  - Affect diffuse and specular equally and maintain reflectance ratio
  - Intensity  $> 1$  used to add bounce lighting
  - Intensity  $< 1$  used to darken ambient and emulate ambient occlusion



# Ambient Lights

Disabled



# Ambient Lights

Enabled



# Glossy Realtime Local Reflections

- Locality of probes still very limited (even with parallax correction)
  - Can't capture small-scale reflections or reflections from dynamic objects
- Exploit image space information where available
  - Screen Space Reflections
  - SSR first used for Crysis 2 DX11 [SCHULZ11]
  - Further evolved SSR for Ryse to work with different material roughness levels



# Glossy Realtime Local Reflections

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- Possible solution: 2.5D cone tracing, similar to Voxel Cone Tracing
  - Use preconvolved scene buffer and min/max depth hierarchy while tracing along reflection vector
  - Cone width depending on roughness and ray distance determines which mip level to sample
- Opted for simpler and slightly cheaper solution for Ryse
  - Perform simple raytracing step to get mirror reflections
  - Build convolved versions of mirror reflections by repeated downsampling and Gaussian filtering
  - Alpha is convolved as well, making unsharp reflections less visible
  - Material roughness determines which mip level to blend on top of probe reflections
  - Less correct than cone tracing, does not account for increased blurriness in distance
  - Little aliasing for rougher materials since convolution is done after tracing (essentially applying a low pass filter)

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# Facial Rendering

# Facial Rendering

- Facial animation and rendering large focus since beginning
  - Ryse very story-driven game with huge amount of cinematics
  - Raising quality bar for characters compared to previous generation was one of the designated project goals
- Largely relying on general shading and lighting improvements
- Some specific solutions required for facial features



# Skin Rendering

- Skin goes through unified shading model
  - Standard BRDF in Ryse is more advanced than what was used for the NVidia Human Head demo [EON]
  - GGX with wide tail works fairly well for specular highlights
    - No urgent need for using multiple lobes to get smoother highlights
- Subsurface Scattering
  - Unified subsurface scattering solution
    - Also used for marble
  - Optimized for skin
    - Many close-up shots on faces
    - Errors in skin scattering profile more noticeable



# Subsurface Scattering

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- Screen-space convolution applied to irradiance buffer after lighting passes
  - Take into account perspective distortion, FOV and aspect ratio to maintain fixed world-space scattering radius
- Convolution based on a pseudo-separable cross bilateral filter [MIKKELSEN10]
  - Two Gaussians combined to determine final kernel weights for convolution
  - First Gaussian with different weights for each color channel (scattering radius for red higher than for green and blue)
  - Second Gaussian takes into account depth differences
- Single Gaussian not enough to approximate skin scattering profile [EON]
  - Scattering profile consists of a sharp spike and a broad base
  - Results will look either blurry or too sharp
  - Blend between original irradiance and Gaussian to approximate spike in profile



# Subsurface Scattering

Disabled



# Subsurface Scattering

Enabled



# Skin Translucency

- Light bleeding through ears and nostrils
- Mostly relying on unified solution shared with vegetation
  - Inverted normal used to estimate amount of light entering from the backside
  - Artists specify density/thickness using translucency map
  - Support for transmittance filter color (wavelength dependent extinction)
- Transmittance color for skin computed from thickness to approximate natural gradient

```
float3 transmittanceColor = exp( (1 - fTranslucency) * float3( -8, -40, -64 ) );
```



# Hair Rendering

- Hair shading well researched topic
- Standard model is Marschner that is commonly used in high quality offline rendering [MARSCHNER03]
  - Hair exposes 2 highlights shifted along hair strands
  - Primary highlight due to specular reflection (hence monochrome)
  - Secondary highlight due to light transmission (partly absorbed hence colored)
- Cheaper approximation by generating 2 highlights using Kajiya-Kay model [SCHEUERMANN04]
- Both models work well, we opted for Kajiya-Kay since hair rendering can be very performance-heavy due to overdraw
- Direction map specifying hair tangent essential for quality



# Hair Rendering

- Main challenge is how to avoid aliasing and make hair look smooth
  - Particularly true for thin individual facial hair as in beards
  - Alpha tested hair can look wiry and is temporally very unstable
  - Alpha blended hair smooth but exposes the well-known shortcomings
    - Sorting issues without order independent transparency
    - Requires forward shading
    - Issues with deferred passes and post processing (mostly DOF) since no depth is written
  - Most high-end solutions so far rely on high MSAA sample counts [MITTRING11][ZIOMA12]
    - Not feasible for realtime usage on consoles
- Tried many variations, rendering more opaque parts to GBuffer, more transparent tips alpha-blended
  - Never got the desired look for some hair types
  - Only fully alpha blended hair provided the quality we wanted for certain types of beards



# Hair Rendering

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- New "thin hair" feature, specifically for hair meshes that are not dense and where individual hair strands visible
  - Fully alpha blended for smoothness
  - Sorting issues need to be addressed on art side
    - Hair directly on top of skin usually doesn't have sorting issues since skin acts as occluder
    - Using mixture of alpha tested caps and thin hair for more complex hair meshes
  - Shading applied using light list generated during tiled shading (Forward+ style)
  - Post-processing issues addressed by "depth fixup" pass
    - Hair does not write device depth to avoid self-occlusion issues
    - Write approximate (alpha-tested) depth to alpha channel during color blending pass
    - Final merge pass combines alpha depth values with original depth before post processing
    - Alpha testing issues (aliasing, thickness) much less noticeable in post processing effects
    - Also used for some particle effects to make them work with DOF



# Depth Fixup

Disabled



# Depth Fixup

Enabled





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# Performance

# Rendering Resolution

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- Ryse performs scene rendering in 900p
  - Sweet spot: Quality per pixel versus number of pixels
- Swapchain backbuffer is 1080p
  - Text very prone to show upscaling artifacts
  - All in-game UI and menus rendered in FullHD 1080p
- Scene gets upscaled after rendering
  - Using custom upscaling pass
    - Smoothstep function applied to fractional part of pixel coordinates
    - Increased sharpness due to mixture of nearest neighbor and linear filtering
    - Efficient: just a single bilinear sample and a few ALUs on the texture coordinates
  - Did not yet evaluate the Xbox hardware upscaler

# Tiled Deferred Lighting

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- Deferred shading heavy on bandwidth usage/memory traffic
  - Overlapping lights cause considerable amount of redundant read/write operations
- Tiled shading [ANDERSSON11]
  - Split screen into tiles and generate a list of all lights affecting each tile in CS
  - Cull lights by min/max depth extents of tile
  - Loop over light list for each tile and apply shading
  - Great bandwidth savings due to just reading GBuffer once and writing shading results once at the end for each pixel
- Single compute shader in Ryse for light culling and executing entire lighting/shading pipeline

# Tiled Deferred Lighting

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- Challenges
  - Frustum primitive culling not accurate, creates false positives
    - Often considerably more pixels shaded than with stencil tested light volumes
  - Handling light resources (all resources need to be accessible from CS)
    - Shadow maps stored in large atlas
    - Diffuse and specular probe cubemaps stored in texture arrays
    - Projector textures stored in texture array (have to use standardized dimensions and format)
  - Keeping GPRs under control
    - Dynamic branching for different light types
    - Deep branching requires additional GPRs and lowers occupancy
    - Had to manually rearrange code to stay within desired GPR limit
- Average savings: 2 – 5 ms, in worst case scenarios a lot more

# Shadow Map Optimization

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- Static shadow map
  - Takes advantage of increased memory on new platform
  - Generate large shadow map with all static objects once at level load time
    - Or when transitioning into a different area
  - Static map used as replacement for 4th and 5th shadow cascade
  - Avoids re-rendering distant static objects every frame
  - 8192x8192 16 bit shadow map (128 MB) covering a 1km area of the game world provides sufficient resolution
  - Saved 40%-60% of drawcalls in shadow map passes

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# Thanks for Your Attention

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Baldur Karlsson for RenderDoc

<http://cryengine.com/renderdoc>

We are looking for more talent to join our team... ☺

<http://www.crytek.com/career/offers/overview/frankfurt/programming-engineering>

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# Bonus Slides

# Environment BRDF

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- Standard Fresnel equation only valid for perfectly smooth surfaces
  - Works for analytical BRDF because microfacets are perfect mirrors
  - Not directly applicable to preconvolved radiance environment maps
- Need to integrate the complete BRDF over the specular lobe
  - Factor out the radiance that is stored in the cubemap from the integral
  - Leaves a second integral containing the Environment BRDF [LAZAROV13][KARIS13]
- Solution for Ryse similar to [LAZAROV13]
  - Store numerically integrated Environment BRDF for reflectance 0% and 100% in 2D lookup table
    - Parametrized by roughness and N.V
  - Use surface reflectance to interpolate between precomputed values during shading

# Eye Rendering

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- Eyes essential for believable characters
- Eye composed of 3 major components
  - Eyeball (moves independently)
  - Ambient occlusion layer (moves with eye lids)
  - Specular overlay for tear fluid (moves with eye lids)
- Various detail features to make eyes more believable
  - Lens distortion, iris self-shadowing, subsurface scattering approximations
- Occlusion essential for quality
  - Screen space solutions not reliable enough here
  - Separate geometry layer with hand-painted maps for ambient and reflection occlusion

# Eye Rendering

- Light scattering by lens/cornea important feature for making eyes more expressive
  - Accurate solution: using 3D LUT, prebaked using photon mapping [JIMENEZ12]
  - Very simple and coarse approximation in Ryse to get some of the desired effect
    - Generate concave version of cornea/lens normal map and dot with light vector

```
float3 vConcavityNormalTS;  
vConcavityNormalTS.xy = -FetchNormalMap( corneaNormalSampler, baseTC.xy ).xy * ConcavityScale;  
vConcavityNormalTS = DecodeCompressedNormal( vConcavityNormalTS.xy );
```

```
float scattering = 0.5 + saturate( pow( dot( vLightTS, vConcavityNormalTS ), 8 ) ) * 2;
```

